

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-25 IO-14 ISO-00 SAB-01 SAM-01

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07

PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15 OMB-01

NEAE-00 DRC-01 /137 W

----- 005677

P R 060855Z MAR 74

FM USINT DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 156

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

USINT ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

USINT CAIRO

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY SANAA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

USMISSION GENEVA

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 0192

BEIRUT PASS BAGHDAD, KUWAIT PASS MUSCAT, GEVEVA FOR MEPC DEL

E.O. 11652: GDS

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TAGS/ PFOR, SY

SUBJECT: POST VISIT ATMOSPHERICS

REF: DAMASCUS 0090 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: DESPITE THE LACK OF VISIBLE PROGRESS TOWARDS DISENGAGEMENT ON THE GOLAN FOLLOWING THE SECRETARY'S RECENT TRIP TO DAMASCUS, ALL OF MY DAMASCUS CONTACTS AGREE THAT PRESIDENT ASAD CONTINUES TO TRUST THE SECRETARY AND THAT ALL NEGOTIATING DOORS REMAIN OPEN. WHILE THERE ARE STILL LOCAL UNDERCURRENTS OF SUSPICION OF USG MOTIVES, MOST DAMASCENES ALSO APPARENTLY SHARE THEIR GOVERNMENT'S VIEW OF THE SECRETARY AND ALSO THEIR GOVERNMENT'S DESIRE FOR VISIBLE ACTION SOON TO PROVE THAT AMERICAN DEEDS MATCH AMERICAN PROMISES. IN SUM, I BELIEVE WE STILL HAVE TIME, ALTHOUGH PERHAPS NOT MUCH, TO BRING ABOUT A GOLAN DISENGAGEMENT AS THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS A JUST MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT. SUCH A SETTLEMENT WOULD, INTER ALIA, SATISFY THE DEEP YEARNINGS FOR PEACE WHICH I HAVE SENSED SINCE MY ARRIVAL IN DAMASCUS TWO MONTHS AGO. END SUMMARY.

2. ON THE EVE OF THE SECRETARY'S VISIT TO DAMASCUS, THERE WAS A MOUNTING AIR OF OPTIMISM AND EXPECTANCY IN THE CITY. SEVERAL CONTACTS TOLD ME IT WAS NOW ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE THE ARAB/ISRAELI PROBLEM WAS SOLVED AND BEFORE US/SYRIAN RELATIONS WERE RESUMED. ALL THOUGHT THAT THE SECRETARY WOULD COME WITH SPECIFIC PROPOSALS WHICH WOULD ENABLE DISENGAGEMENT TO BEGIN FAIRLY SHORTLY ON THE GOLAN PLATEAU. OBVIOUSLY, THIS DID NOT HAPPEN.

3. WHILE I REALIZE THAT THE SECRETARY HAS ESTABLISHED GOOD RAPPORT WITH PRESIDENT ASAD AND KNOWS FAIRLY WELL WHAT IS ON THE LATTER'S MIND CONCERNING DISENGAGEMENT AND NEGOTIATIONS, IT IS ALSO USEFUL TO KNOW WHAT VARIOUS DAMASCUS CIRCLES BELIEVE IS ON ASAD'S MIND AS A REFLECTION OF WHAT IS DOUBTLESS COMING OUT OF THE PRESIDENT'S PALACE IN THE WAKE OF THE VISIT. THUS, DESPITE THE LACK OF SIGNS OF VISIBLE PROGRESS, THE MOOD OF THE CITY, ALTHOUGH NOW SOMEWHAT TEMPERED, STILL REMAINS HOPEFUL. FROM A VARIETY OF SOURCES, DIPLOMATIC AND DAMASCENE, I AM TOLD THAT THE SARG AND PARTICULARLY PRESIDENT ASAD CONSIDER THE SECRETARY'S VISIT TO HAVE BEEN A SUCCESS. MOREOVER, THEY CONTINUE TO RETAIN FULL CONFIDENCE IN THE SECRETARY AND ARE STILL WILLING TO GIVE HIM A CHANCE. MANY OF MY CONTACTS POINT TO THE FACT THAT THE SYRIANS HAVE AGREED TO SEND SOMEONE TO WASHINGTON AS FIRM EVIDENCE THAT ASAD AND THE SARG HAVE CLOSED NO

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DOORS, EVEN THOUGH THE SECRETARY WAS NOT ABLE TO BRING ANY ISRAELI PROPOSALS WHICH WOULD HAVE RESULTED IN IMMEDIATE AGREEMENT ON DISENGAGEMENT. ALTHOUGH THE LOCAL PRESS HAS NOT YET INDULGED IN ANY EDITORIAL COMMENT, THE HANDLING BY THE SYRIAN MEDIA OF THE SECRETARY'S TRIP, WITH PROMINENTLY PLACED PICTURES IN THE NEWSPAPERS AND FAIRLY EXTENSIVE TV CLIPS IS ALSO LOCALLY CONSIDERED TO BE EDITORIALIZING WITHOUT WORDS IN FAVOR OF THE SECRETARY.

4. ALL IN ALL, THE LOCAL WEATHERVANE STILL POINTS TO A GOOD SPRING, YET ONE MUST ALSO BE CAREFUL NOT TO MISREAD THIS GENUINE DESIRE FOR PEACE AND FOR JUST SETTLEMENT AS BEING UNANIMOUSLY HELD. THE OTHER DAY AT A MOROCCAN RECEPTION IN HONOR OF KING HASSAN'S ASSESSION, I MET FOR THE FIRST TIME A YOUNG, ARTICULATE AND SYMPATHIQUE DAMASCENE NEUROSURGEON. IN NO TIME AT ALL, HE MADE IT QUITE CLEAR TO ME THAT "THE NEW GENERATION" IS NOT PREPARED TO LET SECRETARY KISSINGER "TRICK" ARAB LEADERS. IN A PLEASANT BUT FIRM WAY, HE TOLD ME THAT NO MATTER WHAT PRESIDENTS SADAT AND ASAD DECIDE, IF IT LOOKS AS THOUGH THEY ARE "SELLING OUT," NEITHER WILL LONG SURVIVE AND THE STRUGGLE WILL CONTINUE. WE DID NOT HAVE A CHANCE TO PURSUE THE DISCUSSION BUT I AM CERTAIN THAT THERE ARE MANY YOUNG INTELLIGENTSIA LIKE HIM IN SYRIA AND IN THE ARAB WORLD, WHO ARE WATCHING VERY CAREFULLY WHAT THE FAISALS, ASADS AND SADATS ARE DOING AND WHO ARE ONE OF THE REASONS FOR ASAD'S CAUTION AND NEED FOR PALPABLE EVIDENCE THAT HIS POLICY OF REAPPROACHMENT WITH THE USG IS PAYING OFF. I MIGHT ADD THAT AT THE SAME COCKTAIL PARTY FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY 19 YEARS WITH THE FOREIGN SERVICE IN THE MIDDLE EAST, SOMEONE REFUSED TO SHAKE MY HAND DURING INTRODUCTIONS AND LEFT THE GROUP IMMEDIATELY WHEN HE REALIZED WHO I WAS.

5. I MENTIONED THE ABOVE INCIDENTS TO POINT OUT THAT DESPITE THE HOSPITALITY, WARMTH AND GOODWILL OF MANY HERE, BENEATH THE SURFACE IN DAMASCUS AND DOUBTLESS IN OTHER PARTS OF THE ARAB WORLD, THERE STILL FLOW THE CURRENTS OF FRUSTRATION, SUSPICION, FEAR AND EVEN HATRED. FOR THIS REASON, TIME IS OBVIOUSLY NOT ON ANYONE'S SIDE NOR ARE FAIR WORDS AND PROMISES ENOUGH. ACTION AND DEEDS ARE THE ONLY THINGS WHICH WILL ENABLE PRAGMATIC AND MODERATE MEN LIKE ASAD AND SADAT TO SURVIVE OVER THE NEXT MONTHS AND YEARS.

6. IN MY TALKS WITH SYRIANS, I TAKE THE LINE THAT WE CAN FULLY APPRECIATE ARAB SKEPTICISM AND SUSPICION BECAUSE OF PAST AMERICAN POLICIES IN THE AREA, BUT THAT ALL WE NOW ASK FOR IS A CHANCE TO

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PROVE THAT WE ARE ATTEMPTING TO PURSUE A NEW POLICY WHICH WILL BE FAIR AND JUST TO ALL IN THE MIDDLE EAST. THIS LINE USUALLY EVOKES A POSITIVE REACTION AND SURPRISINGLY, EVEN MY NEUROSURGEON FRIEND SAID THAT IF THIS NEW POLICY IS IN FACT IMPLEMENTED, IT WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE.

7. ALTHOUGH THE WARM DAYS WHICH PRECEDED THE SECRETARY'S VISIT IN LATE FEBRUARY HAVE NOW TURNED AGAIN SOMEWHAT COLD, THERE IS NO DOUBT ABOUT IT THAT SPING IS FINALLY ON ITS WAY IN DAMASCUS AND THE ALMONDS HAVE BEGUN TO BLOOM. FROM MY CONTACTS OVER THE LAST FEW DAYS, IT APPEARS TO ME THAT MOST PEOPLE IN DAMASCUS ALSO STILL BELIEVE DESPITE THE LACK OF DRAMATIC AND GOOD NEWS AT THE END OF THE SECRETARY'S VISIT THAT A POLITICAL SPRING IS ON ITS WAY AS WELL. THEY REALIZE, HOWEVER, THAT WHILE THE FORMER IS CERTAIN, THE LATTER REMAINS PROBLEMATIC. YET, THEIR DESIRE FOR PEACE AND THEIR FAITH

IN THE SECRETARY AND THE US REMAIN HIGH AND, THEREFORE, THEY ARE  
PREPARED TO WAIT A LITTLE LONGER. WHILE HAVING A HAIRCUT LAST  
NIGHT, MY BARBER TOLD ME THAT HIS FIRST CHILD, A DAUGHTER, WAS BORN  
DURING THE OCTOBER WAR. WHEN I ASKED HER NAME, HE SAID, "SALAAM".  
SCOTES

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## Message Attributes

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